



## Dal and Roti for Inidan Pastors

By G. R. Prakash

*G.R. Prakash shares with Kim Pettit about his work in producing literature to equip Christian workers in spreading the gospel in India.*

A rumor ran through Delhi. The elephant god, Ganesh, was drinking milk. The news went all over town. People queued to take milk to the temple. The television news crew interviewed those in line, including a malnourished 10-year old boy.

“When I saw his face on television, I asked myself, ‘Who will bring him God’s Word?’” says G.R. Prakash, founder of Faith Institute of Rural Evangelism (FIRE) and Word of Life Literature in Narasaraopet, Andhra Pradesh, India. “Some 200 years ago, Western missionaries came to this land. They relentlessly toiled to win souls through preaching of the Word. William Carey, the great Baptist missionary from England, learned many Indian languages and gave us Bibles in many languages. Thanks be to God for him and for other great men and women of God who left us a great legacy.”

“Yet ever since Western missionaries left India 50 years ago,” adds Prakash, “the Lord has raised up his servants to carry on the work of evangelism and church planting. We are continuing this work.” Of 70 million people in Central and South India who speak Telugu, “only four percent are Christians,” says Prakash. “The needs are vast.”

Since 1989, FIRE has trained approximately 300 workers in evangelism and church planting. Each year, 20-25 people participate in six-month-long training sessions conducted twice a year. Most students have only a primary education. The

students are placed on teams of six and are part of a mobile Bible School. During the day, they are trained in personal evangelism and in how to study the Bible. At night, they engage in evangelism and street preaching. FIRE students are planting churches among the Lambadi, Koya, Konda Reddi, and Yanadi tribal groups.

Prakash founded Word of Life Literature to create materials as follow-up to the FIRE training.

“I’ve been publishing a Bible guide called Vedapadham (Through the Bible)” says Prakash. “Each guide contains a summary of a book of the Bible, It also includes biographical notes, devotional topics, typological, historical, and geographical essays, sermon outlines, and word studies.” Word of Life has published approximately 50 Bible guides. “We used to publish five or six guides for every book of the Bible, but in 2004 we changed,” says Prakash. “Genesis alone comes to 300 pages. Now we are printing one guide per Bible book so the material is all together.” Telugu is, on average, about 40 percent longer than English.

The organization is now working on a preacher’s Bible, with a projected publication date of 2007. Though it will be based on The Living Bible in English, Prakash says his team consults with others for clarification on Hebrew and Greek terms. He adds that “there are perhaps

10,000 different versions of the Bible in English, but only one complete translation in Telugu.”

Prakash hopes the preacher’s Bible’s contextualized study notes will make it particularly useful to thousands of rural and tribal pastors who never went to any Bible School and who have little education.

“We need well-written vernacular works that address ministry in our context,” says Prakash. Referring to works translated from other languages, he adds, “Hamburgers are really good, but not for my stomach. What I need are dal (lentils) and roti (flat bread), the common food of every Indian.

“There is a misconception that India doesn’t have any gospel workers and writers,” he says, “but God is raising up writers to create material that suits the needs of our people. I’ll give two classic examples: One man has written more than 50 books on

the subject of apologetics. Another man, who has only a primary education, has written commentaries on the 66 books of the Bible. These humble brethren print their own books and sell them at church meetings.

“We have a well-defined market,” says Prakash, “among pastors and preachers.” He recalls a Catholic priest once “traveled 100 miles” to buy his literature. “We are evangelical and non-denominational,” he adds. Word of Life Literature works closely with Mission India, EMG, and other ministries.

The publishing house has an average print run of 4,000. “We have very few books in inventory at present,” says Prakash. “We can’t afford to tie up funds.” Though Word of Life Literature has no funding available for the forthcoming study Bible, Prakash is confident the money will come. “God will provide, as He has all these years.”

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